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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0473
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000529

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NSC FOR BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON, ADDIS ABABA PLEASE PASS TO
USAU.

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/05/2018

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SUBJECT: FM ALOR WARNS "THIS WEEK COULD BE DECISIVE" ON
ABYEI

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Deng Alor warned that April 2 discussions on Abyei between the National Congress Party (NCP) and Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) regressed and the next meeting on April 9 could be decisive. He also warned of SPLM plans to aggressively challenge Northern encroachment along most of the border region and outlined an ultimate scenario where the SPLM walks away early from Sudan through a legislative Unilateral Declaration of Independence. End summary.

AL-BASHIR'S ZIGZAG LINE

[1](#)2. (C) Foreign Minister Deng Alor warned CDA Fernandez on April 5 that this week's Sudanese Presidency (President Al-Bashir, FVP Kiir, VP Taha) meeting on April 9 could mark a decisive watershed on whether the conflict over the oil-rich Abyei region is resolved peacefully or not. Alor said that last week's meeting on April 2 "had not gone well" with mutual recriminations about changed positions and backtracking. In his telling, President Al-Bashir himself had backed off an NCP compromise proposal which had been considered relatively favorably by the SPLM (reftel b). The NCP compromise closely followed the "blue line" of the ABC (Abyei Boundary Commission) Experts Report of 2005 while excluding the mostly Arab district of El-Meriem and the oil fields of Higlig. Al-Bashir wanted "a zig-zag line that would not remind him" of the detested ABC Report. The SPLM's position was that if Al-Bashir wanted a zig-zag, it should be north of the blue line. They also want to keep Higlig but are willing to rid themselves of El-Meriem.

[1](#)3. (C) Alor said that there also continue to be problems in border demarcation across most of the poorly-marked 1-1-1956 line. Except in Blue Nile state where the local SPLM Governor (Malik Agar) "knows exactly where it should be," Alor said that there was serious disagreement on where the line should be in the Renk area of Upper Nile State, in the Aweil area of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal (which is Salva Kiir's home turf), and most seriously in the Raja and Kufrat al-Nahhas areas of far Western Bahr al-Ghazal, which border South Darfur and

Central African Republic. Deng said that in some cases there the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) is 50 kms south of the expected border. He predicted that SPLA military units would begin to challenge the SAF very soon in South Sudan's far west. The SAF is in this area supposedly to prevent Darfur rebel infiltration into South Darfur even though there have never been any rebel attacks from that direction. The region is supposedly mineral rich but poorly mapped and lightly populated.

SECESSION WITHOUT REFERENDUM

¶4. (C) Although he admitted that SPLM officials had incorrectly signed off on both some border demarcations and on the census questionnaire, Alor said that the SPLM continued to be concerned about an undercount of South Sudan in the census and about the dropping of questions on ethnicity and religion (GOSS Cabinet Affairs Minister Luka Manoja signed off on the questions being dropped). An unfair census could prejudice the writing of the rules by a new National Assembly for the 2011 referendum. If there is indeed a skewed result in the process, the South could decide to secede before the 2011 referendum and actually not hold a vote but take that fateful step through a decision of the South Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA). CDA Fernandez noted that this would be a clear violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and could give the NCP an excuse to abrogate other parts of the peace accord. Alor agreed but answered that the SPLA could defend itself and recalled that Sudan had become an independent country in 1956 through a similar decision - it had foregone a referendum by making a simple legislative decision for independence.

¶5. (C) Alor asked that senior USG officials consider calling
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NCP officials on April 7 or 8, urging NCP compromise on Abyei. He suggested that Special Envoy Williamson might want to call Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie and AF A/S Frazer might want to call Presidential Advisor Mustafa Othman Ismail to urge an early agreement this week on Abyei that could defuse rising tensions and get the CPA on track (even though neither Nafie nor Ismail have the NCP lead on Abyei, that would be VP Taha and indicted ICC war criminal Ahmed Haroun). Alor had canceled all travel and work as Foreign Minister to concentrate on Abyei for the week (Alor himself comes from that region). He said that for many in the south, "Abyei is the issue," the other ones - census, elections, etc. - can take care of themselves.

A DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP

¶6. (C) He said that "if this discussion fails this week," the SPLM would not walk out of the government as it did in late 2007 but would be "a bad partner" of the NCP in the Government of National Unity and seek to oppose it at every turn. "It would be very difficult for me to work for better US relations with Sudan, if this fails," he warned. Turning to the possibility of talks between Sudan and the U.S. in the very near future, he said that he envisions a senior technical team led by MFA U/S Mutriff Siddiq working on "day to day, technical issues" while more senior officials (like himself and/or Nafie) hover nearby.

¶7. (C) CDA Fernandez briefed Alor on Fernandez's recent visit to Abyei and on our efforts to provide additional assistance there. He also told Alor that UNMIS was concerned about the "hate speech" coming from some Dinka youth and some SPLM leaders like Agok County Commissioner Joseph Dut. Alor said that "people who have suffered sometimes do behave badly" and that the SPLM was conscious of not giving such people too high a profile. Charge also noted that Misseriyya Arab leaders had frankly admitted to NCP attempts to create mayhem

over the past few months by funding and arming PDF units in Abyei that were pushing down into Northern Bahr al-Ghazal. Deng commented that this was part of the NCP's strategy of indirect "war by other means." They negotiate and they plot at the same time to see which one works best for them.

18. (C) Alor complained about President Al-Bashir's increasingly high-handed way of ruling. Even VP Taha was nervous around him. The President had changed 7 of the 10 new ambassadorial appointments carefully agreed upon between the SPLM and NCP. He had changed the assignment of Sudan's Charge d'Affaires in Washington, the SPLM renegade John Ukec Lueth, from Ambassador in Bucharest to South Africa, a key position for the SPLM. Alor had told Al-Bashir that this was unacceptable to the SPLM but Al-Bashir "thinks that John (dubbed "Khartoum Karl" by the Washington Post) does a good job defending the regime." Al-Bashir then suggested Geneva as a spot for the Washington CDA which was still unacceptable to both his Foreign Minister and First Vice President.

19. (C) Comment: Although this week may well be decisive on Abyei, we have heard these words before. What is likely is that both sides will "muddle through" and continue their deadly game of indirect confrontation through talk, pressing and subverting each other. This could well lead to more violence in Abyei and border areas and a slow, steady deterioration in relations between the two. This is a strategy initially perfected by the NCP which the SPLM has adopted as a self-defense mechanism. Alor's warning on the border demarcation, an area like the census, where SPLM reps have not performed well, shows that the party is willing to use its political and military muscles to correct mistakes made by its own representatives. This policy of "renegotiating what has already been agreed upon" is very irritating to the NCP, but is, of course, the same game the NCP plays constantly with the international community. End comment.

FERNANDEZ